



**Charleston Health Equity and Rural
Outreach Innovation Center (HEROIC)
Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center
Charleston, SC**

Mission Statement

The mission of the Charleston HEROIC is to improve access and equity in health care for all Veterans by eliminating geographic, racial/ethnic, and gender-based disparities.

About the Center

HEROIC focuses on three areas of research: health equity, access to care, and rural health. Research covers a wide range of medical and psychiatric outcomes and targets both patient (e.g., self-management) and provider (e.g., patient-provider communication) level interventions. HEROIC aims to improve health outcomes among rural Veterans through examining the increasing role of technology on access. We also seek to understand barriers to care, Veterans' perceptions to care and perceived need for care and how to decrease disparities that may exist among rural and minority Veterans through innovative, patient-centered and culturally tailored interventions.



Leonard E. Egede, MD, MS – HEROIC Director

COIN Director and Staff Physician, RHJ VAMC; Allen H. Johnson Endowed Chair, tenured Professor of Medicine and Director of Center for Health Disparities Research, Medical University of South Carolina

Research Interest:

Interplay among psychosocial factors, race/ethnicity, and health outcomes for chronic diseases, and development and testing of interventions to improve health behaviors in ethnic minorities with chronic medical and mental conditions

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Kenneth J. Ruggiero, PhD – HEROIC Associate Director

COIN Associate Director and Research Health Scientist, RHJ VAMC; Professor and Co-Director of the Technology Applications Center for Healthful Lifestyles, Medical University of South Carolina

Research Interest:

Posttraumatic stress disorder and major depressive disorder; design and evaluation of Web-based self-administered interventions for combat, disaster and violence affected individuals; design and evaluation of Web-training protocols for providers in evidence-based practice

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Investigators



Ronald E. Acierno, PhD

Supervisory Psychologist and Leader of Access/Telehealth Core for Charleston COIN, RHJ VAMC; Associate Dean for Research, College of Nursing and Full Professor of Psychiatry, Medical University of South Carolina

Research Interest:

Access to mental health care including posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, and alcohol abuse; assessment and treatment of older adults with anxiety and mood disorders

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R. Neal Axon, MD, MSCR

Associate Chief of Medical Services and Staff Physician, RHJ VAMC; Assistant Professor of Medicine, Medical University of South Carolina

Research Interest:

clinical medicine and quality improvement focused on chronic disease management and healthcare disparities; impact of dual use and care transitions on outcomes, utilization and mortality

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Tatiana Davidson, PhD

Assistant Professor, Mental Health Disparities Program, Medical University of South Carolina

Research Interest:

Increasing access to mental health treatment among homeless Veterans; addressing mental health disparities among racial/ethnic minority populations; development, evaluation and dissemination of technology-based interventions

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Clara (Libby) Dismuke, PhD

Research Health Scientist, RHJ VAMC; Health Economist and Research Assistant Professor, Medical University of South Carolina

Research Interest:

racial/ethnic disparities in traumatic brain injury disability, mortality and health services utilization/costs; cost-benefit, cost-utility and cost-clinical outcomes of mental and physical health interventions

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**Mulugeta Gebregziabher, PhD**

Associate Professor, Medical University of South Carolina

Research Interest:

Development and evaluation of novel methodologies to analyze health equity and cost data; methodology for handling large administrative such as use of sampling techniques and handling missing data; design and analysis of longitudinal studies

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**Daniel F. Gros, PhD**

Supervisory Psychologist of Primary Care-Mental Health Integration, RHJ VAMC; Assistant Professor, Medical University of South Carolina

Research Interest:

Transdiagnostic assessments and psychosocial treatments for anxiety disorders and depression; dimensional models of psychopathology; psychometrics and scale development and evaluation

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**Anouk Grubaugh, PhD**

Career Development Awardee and Research Health Scientist, RHJ VAMC; Associate Professor of Psychiatry, Medical University of South Carolina

Research Interest:

delivery of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) mental health services to complicated patient populations (e.g., patients with schizophrenia and/or bipolar disorder); evidence based treatment for severe mental illness

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**Kathie Hermayer, MD**

Staff Physician, RHJ VAMC; tenured Professor of Medicine and Director for the Diabetes Management Services and Medical Director of Hospital Diabetes Services, Medical University of South Carolina

Research Interests:

treatment of diabetes, bone diseases and other endocrine diseases; effectiveness of coordinated care and nurse management in diabetes treatment

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**Michael Horner, PhD**

Director of Neuropsychology Clinic and Clinical Co-Director of the Memory Disorders Clinic, RHJ VAMC; Associate Professor of Psychiatry, Medical University of South Carolina

Research Interests:

Effort and motivation in neuropsychological evaluations; traumatic brain injury treatment and evaluation

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**Chanita Hughes-Halbert, PhD**

Research Health Scientist and Leader of Health Equity Core for Charleston COIN, RHJ VAMC; Professor and Endowed Chair of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Medical University of South Carolina

Research Interests:

Sociocultural and psychological factors related to cancer prevention and control behaviors in African Americans; developing interventions to account for social and cultural context; building community partnerships through research

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**Kelly Hunt, PhD**

Research Health Scientist, RHJ VAMC; Associate of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, Medical University of South Carolina

Research Interests:

designing, implementing and utilizing large observational cohort studies of diabetes and cardiovascular disease; rural/urban disparities in chronic disease burden and care.

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**Florence Hutchinson, MD**

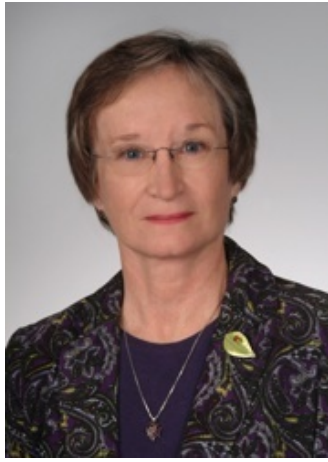
Chief of Staff and Leader of the VISN Coordination for Charleston COIN, RHJ VAMC; Professor of Medicine, Medical University of South Carolina

Research Interests:

Nephrology; kidney disease; health services delivery and redesign

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**Rebecca Knapp, PhD**

Leader of Biostatistics Core for Charleston COIN, RHJ VAMC; Professor Emerita of Biostatistics, Medical University of South Carolina

Research Interests:

Statistical design and planning of clinical trials; design and statistical analysis for multi-center clinical trials; research methodology and analytic procedures for evaluating quality of care

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**Cheryl Lynch, MD**

Staff Physician and Acting Chief of Education, RHJ VAMC; Assistant Professor of Medicine, Medical University of South Carolina

Research Interests:

personal health record as a tool to facilitate lifestyle behavior change; health disparities in diabetes and cardiovascular disease (CVD); e-Health and m-Health interventions

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**Kathryn M. Magruder, PhD**

Research Health Scientist, RHJ VAMC; tenured Professor and Director of the Office of Research Integrity, Medical University of South Carolina; Director of Regulatory Knowledge Key Function Committee of the South Carolina Clinical and Translational Research Institute (CTSA)

Research Interests:

psychiatric epidemiology; mental disorders in primary care; PTSD; mental health services research and clinical epidemiology

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**Donald (Hugh) Myrick, MD**

Associate Chief of Staff for Mental Health Service Line, RHJ VAMC; Professor and Medical Director of the Center for Drug and Alcohol Programs, Medical University of South Carolina

Research Interest:

Pharmacological treatment of addictive disorders; pharmacotherapy of substance abuse and dual diagnosis

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**Charlene Pope, PhD, MPH, CNM, BSN**

Chief Nurse Executive for Research and Leader of Implementation / Partner Research Core for Charleston COIN, RHJ VAMC; Associate Professor of Nursing, Medical University of South Carolina

Research Interests:

Patient and provider communication; qualitative methodology; relationship of speaking practices to clinical and health service outcomes as mechanisms of disparities

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**Elizabeth Santa Ana, PhD**

Evidence-Based Training Program Coordinator for the VISN-7 Homeless Program; Research Health Scientist, RHJ VAMC; Assistant Professor, Medical University of South Carolina

Research Interests;

Psychosocial interventions for patients with addictive disorders; efficacy of group motivational interviewing, text-based delivered interventions, and videoconferencing

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Lisa M. Sternke, PhD, MSN

E-Consult/SCAN-ECHO Program Coordinator, RHJ VAMC

Research Interests:

Combat exposure in female veterans; addictive disorder treatment

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**David J. Taber, PharmD**

Pharmacist, RHJ VAMC; Assistant Professor of Surgery, Medical University of South Carolina

Research Interests:

Optimizing immunosuppression and medication use in transplant patients; quality and healthcare value in transplantation; racial disparities in transplantation

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**Nichole Tanner, MD, MSCR**

Staff Physician, RHJ VAMC; Assistant Professor of Pulmonary and Critical Care, Medical University of South Carolina

Research Interests:

Lung cancer and perspectives and beliefs toward lung cancer screening; disparities in lung cancer care; implementation of board based lung cancer screening and development of lung cancer risk score

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**Peter D. Tuerk, PhD**

Staff Psychologist and Acting Director of PTSD Clinical Team, RHJ VAMC; Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Medical University of South Carolina

Research Interests:

Treatment of combat-related PTSD; Prolonged Exposure for PTSD; promotion and refining of evidence-based treatment for PTSD; treatment dissemination via telehealth technology

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Janet York, PhD, APRN, BC, FAAN

Director of the PMH Nurse Practitioner Residency, RHJ VAMC; Adjunct Professor of Nursing, Medical University of South Carolina

Research Interests:

Psychiatric nursing including coordination and training for psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners and clinical specialists; prevention of suicide

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